

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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OPR-02 RSR-01 /087 W

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PR 230818 Z JUN 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4241

INFO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

CINCPAC

DIA WASHDC

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: STUDENT DEMONSTRATION AT DEMOCRACY MONUMENT

REF: A. BANGKOK 9569; B. BANGKOK 9649; C. BANGKOK 9742

D. FBIS BANGKOK 220240 Z JUN 73

SUMMARY: AS REPORTED REF C, TWO DAY LONG SERIES OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS ENDED WITH REINSTATEMENT OF NINE EXPELLED RAMKAMHAENG STUDENTS, AND PROMISE OF INVESTIGATIONS OF RECTOR'S CONDUCT. BROADER ISSUE OF RAPID PROMULGATION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION WAS BROACHED BY THE STUDENTS, BUT NOT SETTLED AT THIS TIME. U. S. PRESENCE NOT AN ISSUE. SITUATION CALM AND CLASSES SCH-EDULED TO RECOMMENCE ON MONDAY. END SUMMARY.

1. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS:

EXPLUSION OF NINE RAMKAMHAENG STUDENTS REPORTED REF A INSPIRED A SERIES OF STUDENT GATHERINGS ON RAMKAMHAENG CAMPUS ON 21 JUNE. DURING THESE, UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES, EITHER GUARDS

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OR JANITORS, REPORTEDLY ACCOSTED AND INJURED SOME STUDENTS. AFTERNOON JUNE 21 LARGE NUMBER (PERHAPS 10,000) OF STUDENTS FROM ALL UNIVERSITIES GATHERED AT DEMOCRACY MONUMENT IN DOWN-TOWN BANGKOK. MANY, PERHAPS 5,000, REMAINED OVERNIGHT, AND WERE AGAIN JOINED BY THOUSANDS OF OTHERS MORNING OF JUNE 22. STUDENT DEMANDS ESCALATED DRAMATICALLY FROM DEMAND FOR RAMKAMHAENG RECTOR DR. SAKDI'S RESIGNATION AND REINSTATEMENT OF THE NINE STUDENTS TO A DEMAND FOR PROMULGATION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION WITHIN SIX MONTHS. U. S. PRESENCE NOT AN ISSUE AT ANY TIME. THERE WAS NEVER ANY QUESTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD AFFORD TO REINSTATE THE STUDENTS AND SACRIFICE RECTOR DR. SAKDI, BUT IT WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION THAT THEY ACCEDE TO DEMANDS FOR AN EARLY CONSTITUTION.

2. RTG CLOSED UNIVERSITIES AND A COMMUNIQUE SIGNED BY PM THANOM DENOUNCED " GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS" FOR INJECTING OUTSIDE INFLUENCES AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF RAMKAMHAENG RELATED ISSUES TO PROMOTE THEIR OWN POLITICAL ENDS BY CREATING A DISTURBANCE. CABINET HELD EMERGENCY SESSION AND IN AFTERNOON ANNOUNCED AGREEMENT TO 1) REINSTATE NINE STUDENTS, 2) APPOINT A COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE DR. SAKDI'S CONDUCT AND HANDLING OF THE SITUATION, AND 3) INVESTIGATE THE ASSAULT OF THE STUDENTS. AT THE URGING OF PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT), THIRAYUTH BOONMEE, THE CROWD DISPERSED AROUND 5:30 P. M. ON 22 JUNE. SOME WHO WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THE VAGUE NATURE OF THE STEELEMEN REMAINED UNTIL CONVINCED THAT FURTHER ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN IF THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT FOLLOW THROUGH AS AGREED. CONSTITUTION ISSUE NOT RESOLVED AT THIS TIME, BUT THIRAYUTH APPEARED WILLING TO ACCEPT GOVERNMENT GOOD FAITH WITH THE THREAT OF FUTURE DEMONSTRATIONS IF THE CONSTITUTION IS NOT FORTHCOMING IN WHAT THE NSCT DEEMS A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME. EVENING OF 22 JUNE RTG ANNOUNCED REOPENING OF UNIVERSITIES.

3. HIS MAJESTY WAS WIDELY REPORTED TO HAVE ASKED METROPOLITAN POLICE COMMISSIONER, POL. LT. GEN. MONCHAI PHANKONGCHUEN, TO BE SURE HIS MEN AVOIDED CLASHING WITH THE STUDENTS. HE IS ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE CONVINCED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NEED TO REOPEN THE UNIVERSITIES PROMPTLY. THAI RED CROSS HAD FIRST AID FACILITIES ONTHE SCENE UNDER PERSONAL AUSPICES OF H. R. H. PRINCE SUKUMA BHINANDHA, ANOTHER INDICATOR OF ROYAL CONCERN.

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4. MANY PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS DONATED FOOD AND MONEY TO THE ASSEMBLED GROUP. DONATIONS APPARENTLY REACHED 40,000 BAHT (\$2,000), 10,000 BAHT OF WHICH REPORTEDLY CAME FROM KUKRIT

PRAMOJ. ALMOST EVERYONE WE HAVE SPOKEN TO BELIEVES THAT DR. SAKDI ACTED RASHLY, AND THAT THE STUDENTS WERE RIGHT TO DEMAND THEIR COLLEAGUES' REINSTATEMENT. IN SHORT, THIS IS ANOTHER WELL SELECTED ISSUE FOR THE STUDENTS TO HAVE MADE A STAND ON.

5. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, NO SERIOUS MENTION WAS MADE OF THE U. S. MILITARY PRESENCE, ALTHOUGH IT DID APPEAR IN ONE BRIEF SATIRICAL SKIT.

6. CG OF FIRST DIVISION, GEN. ERM CHIRAPONGSE, TOLD AARMA THAT EPISODE WAS A CLEAR DEFEAT FOR THE GOVERNMENT, AND THAT NOW THAT THE STUDENTS HAVE LEARNED THE WINNING COMBINATION OF TACTICS, THEY WOULD BE BACK AGAIN WITH OTHER DEMANDS. AN OFFICIAL IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE HAS COMMENTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT REALLY HAD TO CONCEDE BEFORE SOMEONE MADE A MARTYR OF HIMSELF AND BEFORE POLITICAL OPPORTUNISTS AND/ OR OUTSIDE SUPPORTERS REDIRECTED THE DEMONSTRATION ONTO ISSUES LESS EASY TO CONCEDE OR RESOLVE.

7. COMMENT: AS SOME NEWS REPORTS HAVE POINTED OUT, THE SETTLEMENT IS VAGUE AT BEST AND THE RTG MAY WELL TRY TO INCH BACK FROM THEIR IMPLIED COMMITMENTS. THERE IS, THEREFORE, REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THERE WILL BE FURTHER ACTIVITY OVER THIS AND RELATED ISSUES, THOUGH PERHAPS NOT IMMEDIATELY.

8. THIS IS BY ALL ACCOUNTS THE LARGEST DEMONSTRATION OF ITS TYPE EVER HELD IN THE KINGDOM. OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED THAT THIS IS ALSO THE FIRST TIME EVER THAT STUDENTS HAVE BEEN UNITED ON A NATIONAL BASIS. HERETOFORE MOST STUDENTS ISSUES HAVE FLARED ON A CAMPUS- BY- CAMPUS BASIS. IN ADDITION TO THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM BANGKOK, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY STUDENTS FROM UP- COUNTRY UNIVERSITIES AND FROM THE TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS. A GOOD PERCENTAGE OF THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE GIRLS. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, RELATIVELY FEW STUDENTS FROM RAMKAMHAENG WERE IN THE CROWD. IT IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY THAT NOT ONLY THE LEGITIMATE STUDENT UNIONS WERE INVOLVED,

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BUT ALSO THE INDEPENDENT STUDENT POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS WHICH ARE OFTEN AT ODDS WITH THE STUDENTS UNIONS.

9. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE SPEED AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILL WITH WHICH THE STUDENTS CALLED IN THEIR COMPATRIOTS, INCLUDING FROM UP- COUNTRY CAMPUSES, CAUGHT THE GOVERNMENT BY SURPRISE. NONETHELESS, THE GOVERNMENT MANAGED TO GET THROUGH IT WITH NO DEATHS, NO INJURIES, AND SO FAR AS WE KNOW, NO ARRESTS. THUS, THOUGH OFFICIALS ANTICIPATE FURTHER PROBLEMS OF THIS SORT, THEY AT LEAST FACE THEM WITHOUT THE EXACERBATION OF HAVING CREATED MARTYRS.

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